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ABSTRACT

A study examined the linearity of discourse in letters to the editor written in English by native Japanese speakers and native English speakers. The objective was to examine the linear and non-linear patterns of Japanese and English speakers' letters, respectively. It is concluded that cultures are not limited to one rhetorical pattern, and linear and non-linear rhetorics are universal. Certain rhetorical styles may predominate in a given culture, depending on the writer's social and personal circumstances, and a writer conscious of stylistic conventions can more easily learn new conventions than one who is not. When teaching composition, it is a mistake to say that English is intrinsically linear, and if the linear form appears foreign to Japanese students, it is because they have not been taught this form yet. The students' problems in writing English may mirror their problems in writing Japanese as a result of poor education. The so-called linear form cannot be taught well in a classroom environment uncomplementary to critical thought, or imposed through rote memorization. Teachers of English as a second language should not hesitate to correct errors in logic. The target rhetorical form, not the students' supposed rhetoric, should be emphasized. (MSE)

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Rhetorical Patterns in Letters to the Editor

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Alexander Shishin

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Rhetorical Patterns in Letters to the Editor

Alexander Shishin

新聞への投書に見られる表現構造

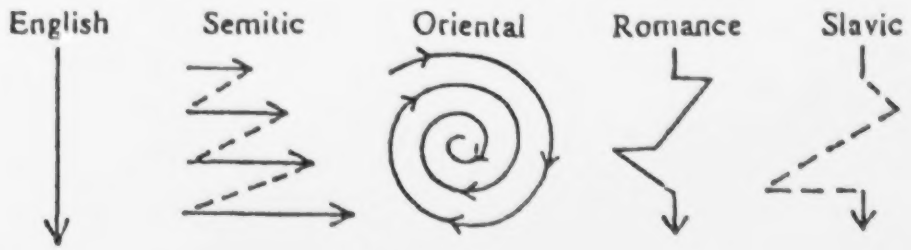
シシン・アレキサンダー

Is the expository writing of native English speakers necessarily linear and that of Japanese non-linear, as many contrastic rhetoric scholars, taking a cue from Kaplan (1966, 1972) have claimed? The purpose of this paper is not to make a definitive rebutal to this assumption but to question it and offer alternative hypothesises. To do this, this paper undertakes an informal study of letters to the editor to several English language newspapers by Japanese and native English speakers. Instances of Japanese linearity and native English speaker non-linearity are cited.

We can, broadly speaking, define style in two ways. First, it can mean simply the way we express ourselves. Thus, everyone can be said to have a style. Second, it can mean a calculated use of words, as in "he has a good writing style." I will focus on the latter definition here. I will use *rhetoric*, the art or science of discourse, interchangeably with style. There is no need to separate theory from practise.

I will discuss the rhetorical patterns of letters to the editor written in English and translated from Japanese to English in order to deal with an agonizing question confronting ESL composition teachers: How is it possible to differentiate between bad writing and cultural rhetorical patterns? When are we justly correcting fallacies and when are we stepping on cultural toes?

Perhaps the most important name in this regard is Robert B. Kaplan, who defined various cultural patterns thus (1966: 15):



Though his methodology has been severely criticized, Kaplan remains intimidating. His remark (1966: 3) that it is fallaceous to assume that because you can effectively write in your culture's style you can write well in a foreign style has yet to receive a definative rebuttal.

A recent article by Achiba and Kuromiya (1983) and a lecture at the 1983 JALT national convention by Shortreed and Kelly are but two instances of scholars trying to define Japanese and English styles in order to see how the former might affect a student writing in the latter. Shortreed and Kelly, in a printed sheet handed out at the 1983 JALT national convention make the following comparisons between "English" and "Japanese" rhetorics, using Kaplan and Nakane as guides:

ENGLISH	JAPANESE
Linear thought sequence, topic-oriented, coordinative - subordinative	circular, abstract, less affirmative
Linear - Kaplan	Dot system - Nakane Circular - Kaplan
1. Topic or controlling idea established at beginning.	1. General theme established (Not as narrow as English topic)
2. Paragraphs develop linearly by proving different perspectives on topic.	2. Different perspectives are established by restating the theme several times throughout a piece of writing.
3. All new information must be relevant to the topic.	3. Theme is continually reinforced, though not always stated directly, by bringing in more loosely related topic areas.
4. Subtopics are serially arranged	4. New and old information are intertwined to form a unitary view.

Shortreed and Kelly, in another handout at the above lecture, give the following example of Japanese style as applied to English composition:

THE ENTRANCE EXAM SYSTEM	topic to be discussed
In Japan we have a lifetime	no relation yet
employment system. Entering a	still no mention of tests
famous company is very important	
to our lives. So we must study	getting closer, but. . .
very hard in our high school	
days. The entrance examination	at last, but still, the
is very important.	relationship is not clear

But is the foregoing a true picture of reality? I thought it was until I started analysing letters to the editor written to the three major English language dailies, the *Asahi Evening News*, the *Mainichi Daily News* and the *Japan Times*. I paid particular attention to letters translated from the Japanese language *Asahi Shimbun* and published in the *Asahi Evening News*. As I did not do a statistical—or for that matter systematic—study I could not reach any definitive conclusions. But I did come up with enough evidence, I believe, to question the assumptions on culture and rhetoric as formulated by Kaplan.

Before proceeding, a few things about letters to the editor.

First, for the most part they represent the thinking of adult minds, thus making them better suited for analysis of cultural styles. The above scholars could have been too rash in making generalizations based on student compositions. What they saw as cultural patterns may have been only youthful ineptitude. Of course adults can also be inept, but they are usually better grounded in convention: their thinking has "matured" as popular wisdom has it.

Second, letters to the editor are short. Problems and rhetorical patterns are more readily apparent.

Third, because of space restrictions, transitions are often abrupt and one is forced to generalize more than one otherwise might. Also, most letters to the editor are in answer to something or someone. This can affect their form.

One generalization which seems widely accepted is that native English speakers write ——some say think ——linearally. Here is a letter undoubtably from a native English speakers, published in the *Japan Times* ——one of similar examples —— which would tend to contradict this assumption:

To the Editor:

The Soviet Union, though admitting having shot down in cold blood an unarmed civilian airliner, blindly refuses to take responsibility for this crime, thus spreading anger and nurturing anti-Soviet reactions around the world.

Human life means little to the Soviet leadership. "Security of the motherland" is far more important to them. However, it is more than questionable how a jumbo jet can endanger national security. Even their version of the plane spying is obviously groundless since everybody knows that sophisticated satellites used by both superpowers are now able to detect a golf ball in Siberia or in the Arizona desert.

This horrifying massacre just reminds us that human rights are ignored by the Russians. As a matter of fact, we should not be surprised. We have known for decades that the Soviet Union keeps on persecuting Jews and other ethnic minorities, that there is no right of self-determination for the Eastern bloc nations, and that there is no basic freedom for the Russian people themselves.

Their internal order and the 'peace' they offer to the world is essentially based on fear. Fear of losing one's job for the Jew who dares applying for an emigration visa. Fear of jail for the Polish worker willing to participate in Solidarity. Fear of concentration camps or psychiatric 'hospitals' for Russians who do not conform. Even fear of blackmail against KGB agents all around the world. Fear of risking an atomic war over Western Europe. This list is far from complete.

We ought to keep in mind that Mr. Yuri Andropov owes his position to his many years as head of the KGB, earning this very position 'thanks' to his 'brave conduct' when ambassador to Budapest in 1956. He has excelled at inspiring fear. This 'talent' won him the highest office in his country.

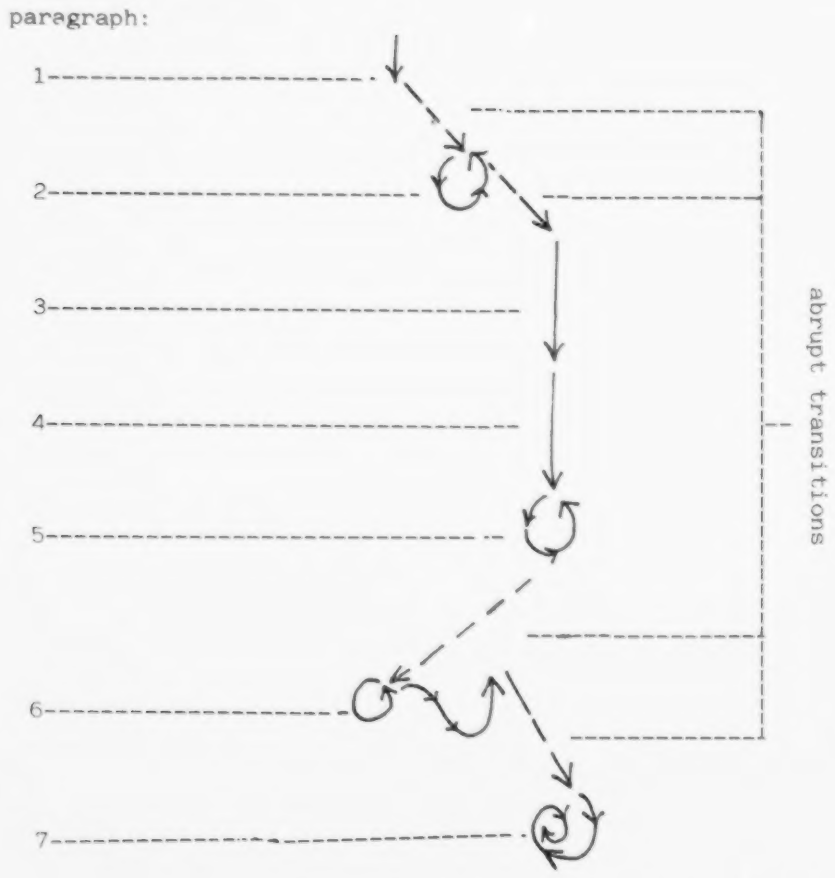
Timing of the KAL incident could not be worse for the Russians, because of the resumption of negotiations on nuclear disarmament in Geneva this past week. How can we trust the Soviet Union? If one pilot is given full authority to kill 269 innocent travelers, how can we believe their missiles aimed at Western Europe (and soon Japan) are installed to 'promote peace'? How can we be sure they will not use their nuclear arms the same way they blatantly used their air-to-air missiles last week?

Today, we have no other choice but to negotiate in Geneva: it is a question of survival for our children, if not for us. Let us hope goodwill will prevail on both sides to reach an agreement. But where is the Soviet Union's goodwill?

DANIEL A.

Tokyo

I have diagramed this letter thus:



Paragraph one introduces what should be the main point: the Soviets have admitted to shooting down an airliner but have refused to accept responsibility, thus making everyone angry. So far the structure is linear, if you ignore the redundancy.

Paragraph two is an abrupt transition. We are hit with two generalizations: "Human life means little to the Soviets" and "'security of the motherland' is far more important to them." These contradice each other — "motherland" should mean human, if but only Soviet, life — unless the quotation marks are to be taken as ironic. The next sentence, saying it is questionable that an Jumbo jet can endanger national security, more or less follows from the latter generalization, though, as in so-called Japanese style (according to Condon and Yousef, 1975) the burden is on us to make the connection. There is another jump: suddenly the writer is talking about spy satellites spotting golf balls in deserts. Again it is up to us for us to make the connection. This paragraph is, in Shortreed and Kelly's words above, "circular abstract, less affirmative" and so comes close imitating Oriental/Japanese rhetoric as defined by Kaplan and Nakane. "Obviously" correlates with the Japanese "as you know" (usually used when you do not know or disagree).

Actually this paragraph is an example of circular reasoning, a common logical fallacy: They knew it was a commercial airliner but shot it down because they have no respect for human life as can be seen by the fact that they shot it down.

Paragraph three is another abrupt digression. The subject has suddenly switched to human rights. But the structure is essentially linear, that is, deductive. Generalizations are supported by specific examples.

Paragraph three leads into paragraph four, which is also deductive.

Paragraph five is somewhat connected to three and four. But it is circular. There is only an implied connection between Andropov's having been ambas-

sador to Budapest (sic) and his excelling in inspiring fear. We are not told how this talent won him the office he held until his death. The implied connections are: KGB + Budapest role + talent = reward: therefore, the Soviet Union is evil. There is no link between this and KAL Flight 007, except by suggestion.

In paragraph six, the first sentence, a generalization, is not subsequentally supported. (How is this incident bad for the USSR?) The sentences following are rhetorical questions, which are indirect generalities. The connection between KAL Flight 007 and nuclear missile negotiations is not made clear.

Paragraph seven is an abrupt digression. The generalizations are only vaguely connected to each other. There is no overall main point. The form again comes closest to "Oriental."

I assume this person's native language is English as his letter contains no grammatical or idiomatic errors. But if he is not, it does not matter. What I have diagramed above is not a cultural rhetorical pattern but a pattern of hysteria. This letter is typical of emotional reactions to the KAL incident: not only letters to the press but statements made by the US government, especially Reagan. What is missing from this person's arguement, and similar ones, is a logical explanation of the motivation behind the KAL shootdown. Instead, we get truisms and cliches, the sort which can be brought out for any situation. Hysteria, at least when conforming to officially sanctioned outrage, is banal. This is a lazy letter. It anticipates agreement.

Following are two letters from the *Asahi Evening News* which were originally published in Japanese. These seem to conform to Japanese style as outlined by Shortreed and Kelly above:

In vitro fertilization

To the Editor:

I am still single and do not even have a fiance. So I may not be able to understand the pains of a couple who wish to have a baby but cannot. But I think human beings should not resort to artificial measures to give birth to a new life: artificial inseminations including in vitro fertilization, genetic recombination, offering a womb to grow another couple's child, and choosing between a son and a daughter when having a child.

This might sound cruel, but I believe those couples who cannot have a child should accept the fact as their destiny and should try to live a full life by themselves.

Out of all the people in this world, most get married but some do not. Some die young and some live long. I suppose that keeps a rather even balance of mankind on this earth.

There will also arise the problem of disparity in wealth. The cost of external fertilization is said to be high, and only rich couples will then have the right to become happy.

Thus I myself am against in vitro fertilization, but if the method is widely adopted, strict controls will be necessary in its application.

Kyoko O.
Company employe
Yokohama
(Asahi Shimbun)

To the Editor:

If I were the mother of the first externally conceived baby in Japan, I would have made my name and everything else clear with pride. Without hesitation, I can say that the accomplishment is wonderful.

Human beings cannot artificially create ova or sperm. I do not think external fertilization is an attempt to tread in the sphere of God.

I myself conceived after seven years of treatment at four hospitals. My husband and I wanted to receive every possible scientific treatment, pray to every deity, and try all other possible measures. We thought if all the attempts failed, then we should give up trying to have a child.

Some may say that having a child is not everything in life. That may be one way of thinking. But the attempt to treat those who cannot have a child although they really wish to is wonderful.

Yuko S.
Teacher
Kiyose City
Tokyo
(Asahi Shimbun)

As in the composition by the Japanese student quoted above, generalizations are piled on generalizations and the central idea is not developed. The writer of the first letter does not tell us clearly why she opposes in vitro fertilization but talks around the subject. In the second letter a theological question is raised, then dropped. The connection of the personal anecdote to the arguement for in vitro fertilization is left up to our imagination. The last paragraph repeats the sentiments of the first.

Are the Japanese necessarily "like that?" The following from the AEN was also originally published in Japanese.

Sunday rush at Narita

To the Editor:

This is in reply to a letter to the Editor, "Dismay at Narita Airport," by Mr. W. Gerald Rainer, president, the American College of Chest Physicians (Aug. 6 in the Asahi Evening News and Aug. 27 in the Asahi Shimbun).

As Sunday afternoons are "rush hours" at the New Tokyo International Airport at Narita, a considerably large number of immigration officers are being assigned on those days to work on papers.

On July 10, when Mr. Rainer arrived, a total of 4,106 passengers passed through the south wing immigration gates after they landed aboard 13 aircraft, mostly jumbo jets, in a short space of two hours between 3 and 5 p.m. Most of these planes were a little behind schedule and the immigration gates were particularly congested around 5 p.m.

Pan American Flight 11, aboard which Mr. Rainer arrived, was scheduled to land at 3:40 p.m. However, it actually landed more than one hour behind schedule, forcing its passengers to come in at the end of long lines. Our check revealed that the passengers had to wait about 40 minutes to clear procedures, even though Mr. Rainer claimed he had to wait for two hours.

Ryohei Kaneda
Chief, Narita Office
Tokyo Immigration Bureau
(Asahi Shimbun)

The form is essentially linear. Mr. Kaneda says in the first sentence what his intent is — to reply to a reader who complained about Narita Airport. He first explains the general situation, then specifically discusses Dr Rainer's plane. He uses a good debator's gambit of saving the most stinging refutation for the last.

The only paragraph that does not appear to fit is the second. It might be a refutation of a point made by Dr Rainer. If so, it is a common mistake: one stemming from having the letter you are refuting in front of you as you write. It seems more a personal failure, not a cultural pattern. In any case, there is nothing circular about Mr. Kaneda's letter. He is direct and uses specific facts, not euphamisms and evasions.

The following letter from the *Japan Times* is by a native speaker.

To the Editor:

In respect to the controversy over George Will's columns in The Japan Times, I would like to express appreciation for his inclusion in your paper. I have for some years been an enthusiastic observer of his when he appears on TV (in the U.S.) and an attentive reader of his columns wherever I find them.

Although his views are often diametrically opposed to mine and, as a would-be "liberal" I often disagree with his position, when I want a lucid and intelligible explication of what others are thinking I find his column hard to beat for intelligence, clarity and wit.

It is these qualities in writing which keep us subscribing to The Japan Times and which move me to recommend George Will as a stylist to my students of English composition. Thank you very much for continuing to print columns of this caliber.

M.N. C.
Osaka

This was written in response to an attack I made on columnist George F. Will. I argued that he was dishonest because he used innuendo and cheap wit in place of rational discourse. I gave specific examples. The writer does not answer me on a single point. Instead, she only speaks in general terms: She enjoys Will in print or on TV (first paragraph), enjoys is wit and intelligence (second paragraph) and restates the sentiments of the first paragraph, adding that she recommends Will as a "stylist" to her students (third paragraph.)

This letter is strikingly similar to the letters about in vitro fertilization. It conforms to Kelly and Shortreed's definition of Japanese form. It establishes a general theme, establishes different perspectives by restating the theme several times, reinforces the theme by introducing loosely related topics (". . . as a would-be 'liberal' I often disagree with his position. . .") and uses old and new information (such recommending Will to composition students) to form a unitary view. Note that the writer is an English composition teacher and therefore should be familiar with so-called English rhetoric.

Is the writer trying to be Japanese? Perhaps. Yet, there is nothing consciously "Japanesey" about her letter. And in any case it does not matter. What is important is that this supposedly Japanese-like form fits English and a non-Japanese topic with no problem. Most likely what motivated the writer to avoid admitting that she was sympathetic to opinions she knew were disgusting.

Pain avoidance——either inflicting it or receiving it——is the primary reason for indirection in expository writing.

Here is the heart of the matter: *motivation* has decisive influence on style. A fallacy common to letter writers (and many professionals) is confusion of expression of feeling with persuasion. The reason many people cannot get beyond emotionalism when writing is that they have nothing at stake. They only need psychological release.

This is where Mr. Kaneda is different. He must defend the reputation of his bureau. Therefore, he must present facts, not feelings.

Mr. Kaneda is also different from the other letter writers in that he knows what he is talking about. This also influences style, as the following letter from the *Asahi Evening News*, also originally published in Japanese, demonstrates:

Campaign Issues

To the Editor:

Since Diet proceedings were stalemated for about a month over the question of whether to lay before the Diet a resolution urging former Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka to resign as a Dietman, all the opposition parties will criticize the ruling Liberal-Democratic Party for its lack of political ethics in the campaign for the general election scheduled for Dec. 18. Within the ruling party, the mainstream and the non-mainstream factions will blame each other for the matter.

The problem of political ethics may be the easiest point for the opposition camp to attack the LDP on, for a guilty verdict was handed down on the former prime minister, who is still one of the most influential members of the political world.

However, I do not think the opposition should carry out the election campaign focusing only on the problem of political ethics and the attack on Tanaka just because it will be easily accepted by the general public.

The reasons are as follows:

First, such an election campaign would blur the distinctions among the opposition parties. There should be diversities in their policies over the issues of defense, the economy and administrative reforms. Those diversities should be made clear.

For example, the Japan Socialist Party recently presented a rather flexible policy on the defense issue. The party should try its best to make their new stance known clearly to the public through the election campaign.

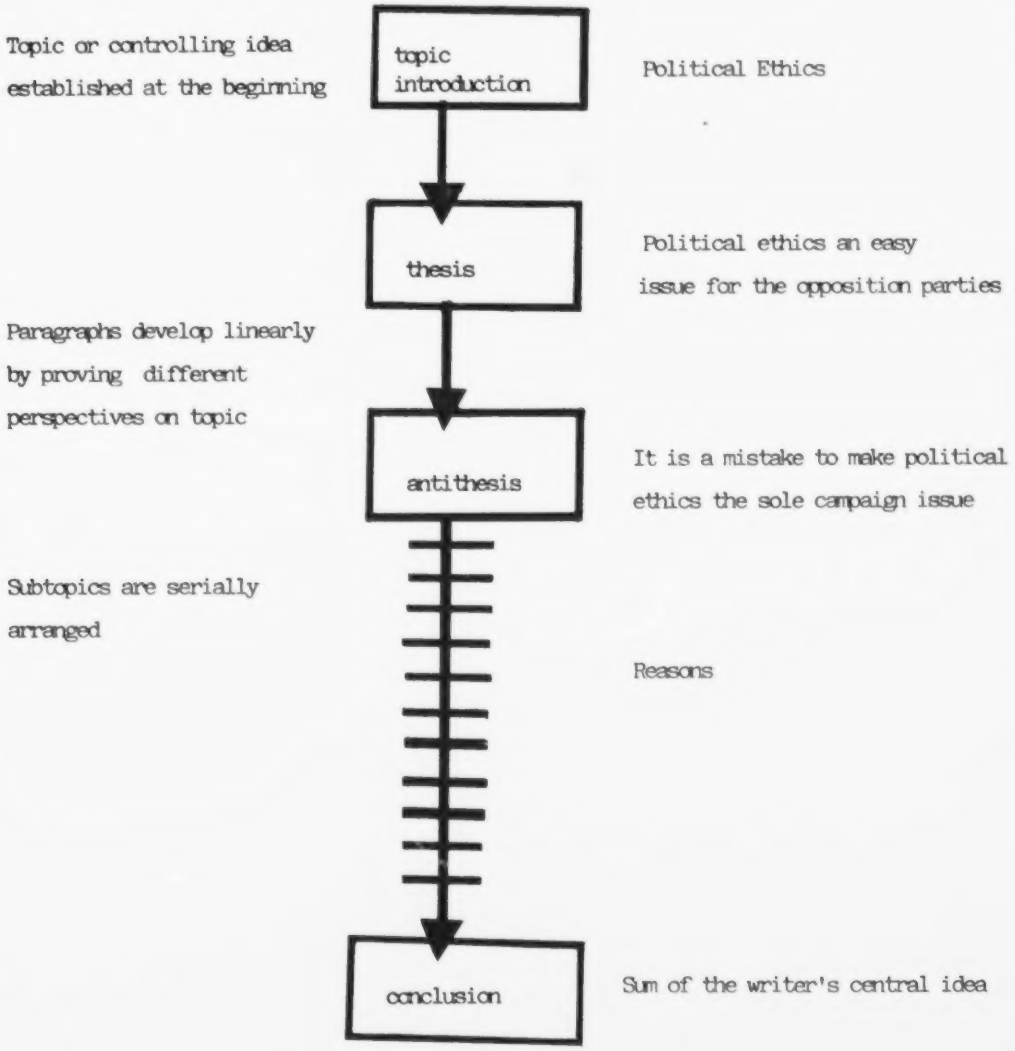
Secondly, if all the opposition parties think that it will be advantageous for them to hold an election while the verdict on the former prime minister is still vivid in the memory of the public, they can be blamed for looking down on the public as being an ignorant crowd. Such an attitude is no different from that of the LDP, which wanted to wait until the public forget about the verdict.

Thirdly, as Justice Minister Akira Hatano pointed out, the ethics of the political world are different from those of ours. The general public is aware of this fact and is observing with a cool and practical eye how the politicians will deal with the issue.

We should never ignore the problem of political ethics, but should never let the policies at issue be blurred, either.

Hajime I.
Company executive
Tokyo
(Asahi Shimbun)

Whether you agree or disagree with this writer, you must admit that he is well-informed. Probably for this reason is arguement is logically developed and his style is linear.


Topic or controlling idea established at the beginning
topic introduction
Political Ethics
thesis
Political ethics an easy issue for the opposition parties
Paragraphs develop linearly by proving different perspectives on topic
antithesis
It is a mistake to make political ethics the sole campaign issue
Subtopics are serially arranged
Reasons
conclusion
Sum of the writer's central idea

I stress that motivation is crucial to form. The following three letters from the *Asahi Evening News* should further bring the point home. They are examples of a common reason for writing to the press: personal experience.

Part-Time Jobs for the Aged

To the Editor:

I like reading, walking in the suburbs, visiting art exhibitions and attending cultural lecture meetings. So I often went to a library and a cultural center in Iwaki City, where I live.

At the end of this summer, one of my acquaintances suggested that I be registered at "Silver Jinzai Center," a kind of talent bank or a placement agency for senior citizens. My first work as a member was to help with the household duties of a family in which an old woman has to stay in bed because of pain in her back.

In the lingering summer heat, I worked hard, covered with perspiration for the first time in many years. I was very pleased when I received the wage for the work, knowing I was of some help to society once again.

I at once sent presents to my son and his wife and to my little grandchildren living far away. Since then, I have been offered work from the center every month. The work is of a kind we old people can do, and I enjoy working.

In our present aging society, there are several merits to the old having light jobs which will not put a great burden on their health. By working, old people will be able to avoid becoming senile, as well as get rid of stress and keep young.

Misao T.
Part-time worker
Iwaki City
Fukushima
(Asahi Shimbun)

Why All the Pushing?

To the Editor:

I write with a complaint about Japan, although let me first say that on the whole I like it here very much.

Here is what bothers me: all the pushing on trains.

When I first came to Tokyo, a few months ago, I thought all this pushing to get on and off trains was necessary. I figured that nobody really liked to do it, but that people just thought they had to so that they could get where they wanted to go. But now, I'm not so sure.

The other day the train home arrived at my station. Some fellow in the corner, apparently afraid the doors would close before he could exit, started pushing people around like the place was on fire. He thrust me aside and got off, having disturbed a great many people. Meanwhile, I counted to "ju-ni" (I always try to count in Japanese these days), then calmly stepped out myself.

Try something different someday. Walk on and off at a normal pace, and ask yourself whether all the pushing is necessary.

All that aggravation the man caused by his pushing was totally needless. In fact, I think practically all the pushing here is needless. There is plenty of time for people to walk briskly but peacefully when they leave trains, and there is plenty of time for people to get on in an orderly manner. Instead, every day all over Tokyo people push and shove each other like sumo wrestlers!

What will I tell my brother when he comes here? The one thing he hates is strangers hurting strangers.

Please—let's set up a dialogue about this. Why all the pushing? Why not let the subway be the subway, and let sumo be sumo? Can somebody write to the paper and explain why you do all this pushing, and whether it is really necessary?

D. Hamilton T.
Tokyo

Don't Spread Cold Germs

To the Editor:

Coughs are often heard in the crowded commuter trains during this season. "Someone is coughing behind me. If I'm standing too close I may catch a cold from him," I thought one day in a train. As expected, I felt chilly a few days later and ran a fever. At such times, I make it a rule to stay in a warm bed. I do not take medicine.

Recently people do not seem to be wearing gauze flu masks in public. I hope they at least take care not to spread their germs.

In offices, there are some who say they cannot take a day off just because of a cold. They take medicine and continue coughing. Some even say in jest, "I would love to give my cold to someone else. Then I would be rid of it." What a nuisance!

I suggest people take a few days off as soon as they catch a cold. It will prevent the illness from being spread to others.

Tsugiko M.,
Osaka

(Asahi Shimbun)

All three are anecdotal. The retired woman gives a series of related anecdotes which lead up to a concluding didactic statement. The man complaining about pushing uses one anecdote as the center of discussion. The man worried about cold germs uses anecdotes which are generalized, almost architypal.

The opening paragraph of "Part-Time Jobs for the Aged" is only peripherally connected to the rest of the letter. It is used, perhaps, to show that the writer is an active person, unlike the stereotyped stay-at-home oldster. It is also likely that she got her job through the cultural center. It is possible that in her mind the connection seem so obvious that she neglects to mention it. This is a common error.

Her method after the first paragraph is essentially inductive. Specific examples lead up to the conclusion that old people can be useful. The transition from the personal to the general is abrupt. In strict logical terms, the letter is fallacious in that the writer uses but one example——her own experience——to prove a general point.

The man complaining about pushing builds his case on a single example. Someone pushs past him apparently afraid that he cannot get out in time. The writer counts to twelve and then calmly walks off. Therefore, his arguement goes, everyone can do the same.

Though technically fallacious, this writer's letter is good because it is funny. Humor allows certain latitudes that straightforward writing cannot have. There are several interesting aspects to this letter.

The beginning is indirect. The writer says he has a complaint but does not say what it is. He follows this with the universal foreigner's apology: I really do like your country, but—— There is a brief digressive echo of this apology when he says that he is trying to say things in Japanese as much as he can. (See, I honestly do like your country.)

He also indirectly employes the *hasukashi*——shame——arguement: "What will I tell my brother when he comes here?" This is a humorous digression.

Humor is indirect. You must make the connection in order to laugh. Moreover, humor obscures the humorist's real feelings. Obviously the writer is displeased about being shoved on public transport, but rather than using direct anger he gives us seemingly good-natured jibes.

The letter about cold germs mixes generalizations and specific examples. It digresses considerably and has two conclusions: people should wear gauze masks and people with cold should stay home.

These letters break stylistic and logical rules——yet they stick. This is probably because they are conversational. The writers write as they might talk. Thus the form is meandering like informal conversation.

One letter was written by a foreigner, the others by Japanese. Yet, structurally they are similar. The elderly woman's letter is the most "linear" if one sees it as inductive. (It might be seen as being close to the Kaplan/Nakane models as well. This is one example of how subjective our definitions of stylistic form are.)

* * *

To sum up: Given the limited amount of material that could be presented here, no definitive generalizations are possible. Instead I offer the following hypothesis:

1. Cultures are not limited to one rhetorical pattern.
2. "Linear" and "non-linear" rhetorics are universal. Conventions like business letter openers and personal ideosyncracies are incidental to rhetorical structure.
3. Certain rhetorical styles in a given culture may take predominance over others. This largely depends upon the writer's social and personal

circumstances. (For example, both the in vitro fertilization writers are women. Given that women in Japan are expected to avoid expressing bold opinions, is it possible that they thought that being logical — linear — would be a social transgression?)

4. A writer conscious of stylistic convensions can more easily learn new conventions than one who is not. (This contradicts Kaplan.)
5. When teaching composition, it is a mistake to say English is intrisically linear. English-speaking people do not have a monopoly on logic.
6. If the linear form appears foreign to Japanese students, it is because they have not been taught this form yet, not because of innate cultural qualities.
7. Our students' problems in writing English may be a mirror of their problems in writing Japanese as a result of poor education. Ironically ESL composition teachers might have to teach in foreign language what Japanese students should have first learned in their own.
8. The so-called linear form cannot be taught well in an classroom environment uncomplementary to critical thought. It cannot be imposed through rote memorization. It demands a creative approach to education where the student is expected to think for him or herself.
9. Excusing illogic, bigotry, etc. as "our way of thought" is wrong. ESL teachers should feel no embarrassment about correction errors in logic, as long as this is not done with an air of cultural superiority.
10. The target rhetorical form, not the students' supposed rhetoric or rhetorics should be emphasized by the teacher. Hasty generalizations of the "We are linear but you are circular" variety must be avoided.

Last, I must confess that I do not read Japanese and therefore cannot assess what style is the dominant one in Japan. Also, I do not wish to disparge anyone's work in this area. We are all pioneers and therefore subject to gross errors. I, for one, look forward to being disabused.

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